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Crisis and Sexual Exploitation: The Case of Refugee Pornography

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Abstract

In recent years, refugee pornography experienced an upsurge in popularity. Thereby, it uses the mode of crisis as a narrative tool to justify sexual exploitation. The goal of this paper is to untangle the construction of such pornography as a racial fetishization of the veil serving as an extension of the sexualization of the "Oriental" body during the colonial era. To open entry points for an academic debate, I will put it into relation to concepts such as exoticization, othering, and sexuality. First, I want to explore current academic debates on pornography, specifically on the interrelations between politics and porn. Next, I want to analyze the popularity of refugee pornography in the case of Germany and find possible correlations between trends in popularity and political events. To find an explanation for the latter, I want to turn to postcolonial studies, more specifically, to a feminist approach towards Orientalism. Further research is of importance, given the popularity of this peculiar combination of crisis and sexual exploitation.

Keywords: Pornography; Refugee; Racial Fetishization; Postcolonial Feminism; Oriental Body

Introduction

Picture the following scenario: A young woman wearing a hijab applies for work. While she is sitting in an office, the white, middle-aged man she is supposed to have the interview with enters the room. As she explains her desperate need for this job due to her being a refugee, he suddenly starts to approach her and forcibly puts her hand on his crotch area. As she reacts visibly repellent and takes her hand away, he begins to voice his desires verbally and offers her money in exchange for sexual intercourse. Intimidated by his actions, she reluctantly agrees to his demands. This leads to brutal sex in which the man subjugates her and, afterward, leaves the money on the table and leaves the room without a word.

What may seem like a tragic fragment of a single life deeply affected by war and conflict and forced to seek refuge in another country only to be commodified by foreign patriarchal structures, is, in fact, the narrative of a pornographic movie. According to the data by UNHCR (2018), 68,5 million people worldwide are forcibly displaced. Many take dangerous routes to other countries in search of a better life free of suffering. In the course of this dynamic, a heated political, cultural, and social discourse erupted worldwide. Germany is no different in this regard, where the term "refugee crisis" ("Flüchtlingskrise") gained immense popularity in recent years. In the course of this, Rodríguez (2018) assessed that "the refugee has been reduced to a potential worker" and that "asylum policies seem to be turning into a new way of regulating and controlling racialized labour migration" (Rodríguez 2018: 25). This labour relation, however, does not apply to female refugees, nor does it apply to the sphere of the sexual, the fantasies, and the fetish.

When the two photographers Nelles and Al-Badri first introduced the term "refugee porn" while presenting their project "We refugees", they meant a different dimension than the one I will be presenting throughout my essay, namely the high-polish recordings by professional producers showing fleeing people and overcrowded lifeboats (Wiedemann 2015). In this case, however, I want to refer to refugee pornography quite literally, meaning a pornographic movie depicting a female refugee, both real or acted, performing sexual intercourse with a usually white man in exchange for food, housing, or money. Therefore, the mode of crisis, expressed in the role of the refugee, becomes a vital part of a plot, underlying the exploitation of her position of vulnerability through the implied act of rape. This pornographic content can be found on websites like xhamster, Pornhub, and Redtube and can be manually searched through these websites´ search functions. Within the past few years, there has been a gradual increase in similar movies being uploaded on these websites. Additionally, following this trend, older videos have been re-uploaded and rebranded to contain the word "refugee" within the title. The following is a selection of titles which can be found on these websites:

- *This teen Arab refugee is looking for someone who will help her and give her a room to stay. She was offered by a horny boss some money and a room if she can fuck with him. (20.348.037 views[1])*
- *Watch this hungry Arab refugee asked for some food and money and leads to a hot hardcore sex. (5.509.616 views)*
- *Refugee applies For Job Ends Up Fucking For Cash. (8.956.007 views)*
- *Junger arabischer Flüchtling braucht eine Bleibe und ich leihe einen helfenden Schwanz ("Young Arab refugee needs a place to stay and I lend a helping dick"; 3.304.958 views)*

Throughout this paper, I want to explore possible explanations of how one person's grim reality can transform into another person's pleasure. Therefore, I will relate this phenomenon to concepts such as exoticization, othering, and sexuality. First, I want to explore current academic debates on pornography, specifically on the interrelations between politics and porn. Next, I want to analyse the popularity of refugee pornography referring to Germany within my examples and find possible correlations between trends in media popularity and political events. To find an explanation for the latter, I will revert to postcolonial studies and the feminist approach towards Orientalism which will highlight the symbolic significance of the veil in these movies.

Pornography and Politics

Current Debates

In the following section, I will consider the current discussions surrounding pornography, especially when it comes to the intersection between pornography and politics. I will do so by analyzing the popularity of refugee pornography in the case of Germany. As archaeological discoveries from all over the world suggest, pornography has accompanied humankind throughout almost all of its existence and geographical locations. The sexually explicit frescoes in the city of Pompeii, the sculptures on the temples of Madhya Pradesh and Eugéne Pirou's 1899´s Coucher de la Mariée, the world's first known softcore erotic movie (Head 2018), all show us humanity's universal fascination with sexuality and its urge to manifest this fascination in a wide range of historically changing depictions. Nevertheless, the history of pornography never followed a stringent line of evolution but instead always proved to be a discursive battlefield in which societies bitterly fought over the question of how to socially define this phenomenon.

The most recent example in the Western hemisphere of wide debates concerning the social status of pornography is the so-called "porn wars" (also known as "sex wars", "lesbian sex wars" or "feminist sex wars"). Their roots can be traced back to the 1970s when activists MacKinnon and Dworkin advocated for the prohibition of the production of pornography in the US based on their understanding of it as a consequential subordination of women. However, they were debunked with the liberal response that pornography is an act protected by the right of free speech guaranteed by the First Amendment. Hence, an intense philosophical debate spurred, where issues of subordination, empowerment, liberation, and the dignified depiction of human sexual experience were explored (Dworkin 1989; Novaes 2017; Tong 1982). Although losing its initial intensity, the debate continues to this day as researchers explore the impact of new technological innovations on our understanding and consumption of pornography and its effects on our physical and mental health (Chedekel, 2012).

A scientific subfield of this debate completely lost in time, however, is the research of the intertwining of pornography and politics, be it the research on the correlation between political alignment and porn consumption or studies concerning politicized pornography. In-depth studies analyzing these issues thinned out from the 1990s onwards and used methodologies which are outdated and, therefore, are not applicable to current pornographic phenomena (for example the categorization into "Religious Conservative", "Liberal" or "Antipornography Feminist" in Cottle, Searles, Berger and Pierce´s analysis published in 1989).

The digital revolution made pornography accessible as never before and transformed it into a large source of traffic on the internet (for example from July 2009 to July 2010, about 13 percent of Web searches were for erotic content; Ruvolo 2011). Over the years, a wide range of new possibilities emerged for the industry, leading to the creation of new categories of pornography, even introducing Virtual Reality devices. Although the implementation of a (usually makeshift) story is quite common in pornography, designed to provoke a stronger identification and engagement between the viewer and the actors and, therefore, a more intense sexual experience, the case of refugee porn is particularly interesting, combining a range of political, cultural and social statements within the story.

Refugee Pornography in Germany

Before engaging with this matter academically, one must ask oneself if this phenomenon is socially relevant enough. Especially in the realm of pornography, customer demands are often very diverse, yet not all of them make research a gainful endeavour. To answer this question regarding the consumption of refugee pornography in Germany, statistics can provide a general insight. The data for the following figure has been provided by xhamster, the second biggest online provider of pornographic material in the world (siteworthtraffic 2019), with an estimated traffic of 1.03 Billion sessions (a coherent time period a user spends on the website) per month (rank2traffic 2019).

Figure 1 (as seen right) shows the monthly share of search requests for the term "refugee" relative to the total number of clicks on the website in Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Usually, users search for pornographic content in English. However, even if a German user types in the keyword "Flüchtling" ("refugee"), it will automatically be translated within the system. Clearly recognizable in this figure is the overproportional presence of search requests from Germany. This can partly be explained by the fact that the second most visitors to this website come from this country (11,8 percent; rank2traffic 2019). However, the United States ranks first with 20,6% of the total visits while having far fewer search requests for "refugee". Although xhamster does not provide absolute numbers, researchers of ZeitOnline estimated the number of search requests for "refugee" to be around 800,000 per month during peak seasons on xhamster (Amjahid 2018). Keeping in mind that this number refers to only one of many pornographic websites, the total number of search requests will be far higher.
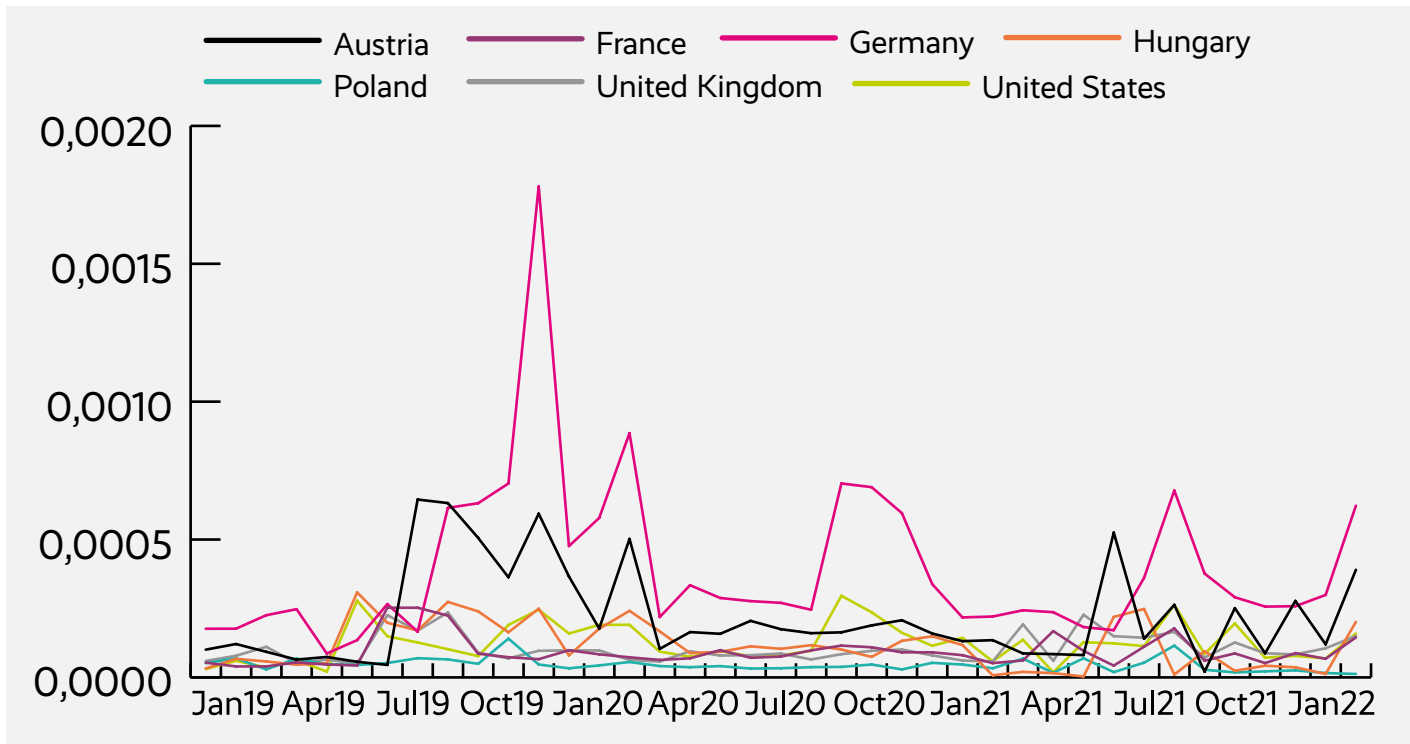
Figure 1: Monthly share of search requests for „refugee" relative to the total number of clicks

We can see four major spikes in Germany's search requests: in December 2015, March 2016, October 2016 and September 2017. If we contemplate relevant political events over these search request spikes, we arrive at the following results:

1. The strongest indication for a possible correlation with political events can be traced back to December 31, 2015, when North African men allegedly sexually assaulted white German women in Cologne´s main train station. This event "reactivated the dichotomy of civilization and barbarity" (Rodríguez 2018, p. 17), sweeping through German mass media and producing a political shift away from the hospital Willkommenskultur (welcome culture) and strengthening German right-wing dynamics and movements.

2. In March 2016, the Balkan route, which until then hosted the biggest stream of refugees coming to Germany, was closed off. On March 20, an agreement between the EU and Turkey came into force, stopping refugees from traveling to Greece through Turkey. Consequentially, this month's news broadcasts were filled with pictures of desperate people trying to cross the borders and overfilled detainment camps (Hanewinkel 2016).

3. October 2016 was marked by a massive amount of racist assaults. Incendiary attacks took place in Jüterborg, Naumburg, and Neubrandenburg. In Potsdam, anonymous perpetrators attacked a Mosque, injuring four people. Further assaults

happened in Schwerin, Bautzen, and Sangershausen (Rafael 2016).

4. In September 2017, the federal election took place in which the Alternative for Germany (AFD) heavily relied on migration and asylum issues in their election campaign. The streets were plastered with election posters proclaiming racist statements mainly directed towards Muslims, e.g. "Burka? Wir stehen auf Bikinis" ("Burka? We fancy Bikinis"; Kamann 2017; Amjahid 2018). This potential correlation indicates a situation in which contemporary political events evoke xenophobic and Islamophobic resentments in German citizens, which they then translate into the most private realm of their lives, their sexuality. Nevertheless, how can we explain this particular dynamic?

With a feminist take on pornography, Novaes (2017) analyses the question if feminist pornography is a form of propaganda. Thereby, she distances herself from the originally Marxist, power-laden, and negatively connotated notion of the concept. Instead, she utilizes a more neutral definition proposed by philosopher Sheryl Tuttle Ross: ´Propaganda is a message used with the intention to persuade a socially significant group of people, on behalf of a political institution, organization, or cause´ (Novaes 2017: paragraph 7). Following this definition, Novaes concludes that feminist pornography is indeed a form of propaganda, as its producers have a political agenda, namely the promotion of certain norms and values in society through the distribution of pornographic material showing a sensual,

sexual exchange between two partners. This definition, however, cannot be applied to refugee porn. Although highly political, it seems unlikely that the producers try to promote the right-wing ideology of racial superiority in their videos. Instead, in a market-based economy, the supply of movies featuring such a narrative increases through the popularity among its consumers. In fact, even older videos dating back to before the so-called "refugee crisis" got rebranded with new titles and new descriptions, now allegedly starring refugees or featuring a story in which a refugee gets subordinated and sexually exploited by a white man.

A good example of the "forces of the market" shaping this trend and promoting producers to create movies with such narratives or actors is Antonio Suleiman (The Local Voices 2016). Fleeing Syria at the age of 19, Antonio came to Germany in 2012 with the hope to work as an actor. However, after many failed attempts to enter the job market due to his refugee status, he turned to the porn industry in a last desperate resort to fulfil his dream. After participating in a few movies, he decided to become a porn producer himself and actively promote his porn movies as "refugee porn made in Germany" (Amjahid 2018: 1). Although his self-proclaimed goal is to "challenge other´s perceptions" (The Local Voices 2016: paragraph 1) and present the "Syrian body" as something that "can have sex and does not only exist in order to die" (The Local Voices 2016: paragraph 9), the movies themselves still feature similar patterns of female subordination being present in most pornography. Indeed, one may argue that his stance towards his work and the way he presents it is only possible because he is a man. Conversely, women participating in such movies are being dominated in a way that forces them "to submit themselves to that normalizing white, male gaze that makes them subaltern, voice-less victims" (Giuliani 2016:16). Hence, it condemns them to be penetrated by the hegemonic discourse, in the case of porn, figuratively and literally through the sexual act itself.

This section investigated present discussions on pornography and assessed that research on the intertwining of pornography and politics faded in the last 20 years. This development appears unfortunate, as the digital revolution made pornography accessible as never before and with it, provided a plethora of new pornographic categories, thereby also including highly politicized ones such as refugee porn. As shown by the statistics, this phenomenon is very popular in Germany and, hence, highly relevant for research. Additionally, the data suggests a correlation with political events, indicating that numerous German citizens translate current xenophobic and Islamophobic discourses into their sexual lives. If this occurring trend is not being promoted by political institutions and actors, but instead, originates from consumer demands and is being fulfilled by producers in search of profit, the question remains why this movement from the social to the sexual sphere takes place. What are the motives for people typing in the term "refugee" in the search engine of a pornographic website? Of course, one cannot look into the heads of these individuals. Neither would it be adequate to drift into the sphere of speculation void of any scientific purpose. If we, however, embed this phenomenon into a larger theoretical framework we can find patterns that serve as conscious- and subconscious motives that overlap all of these individuals' decisions to watch refugee porn. Let us, therefore, resort to some postcolonial scholars.

The Urge to Unveil

Towards a Feminist Orientalism

In the following section, I outline the theoretical framework that I will then apply to refugee pornography. First, I sketch out relevant ontological and epistemological elements of postcolonial studies. Next, I present some intersectional studies combining Orientalist and feminist thoughts, which I then relate to the phenomenon mentioned above.

Generally, postcolonial studies, similar to postmodernism, aim to deconstruct (usually binary) concepts to reveal the underlying power relations, thereby engaging with and questioning frameworks such as language, power, truth, and subjectivity. In its essence, postcolonialism proclaims that although Western colonialism began in 1492 and formally ended in the second half of the 20th century, the colonial relations of this era still exist. This is argued to be the case as the colonial forces did not just exert physical and military violence onto the colonized subjects, but also epistemic and ideological power (for example Linebaugh and Rediker 2001). Unlike neo-colonialist thinkers, who focus more on the material aspects of the continuation of colonial relations (Nkruma 1965), postcolonial scholars analyse the cultural conflict in which the Western colonial powers enforced their view of history, values, and norms which they regarded as universal. Thereby, they presented the West as civilized, rational, and enlightened, hence, colonialism as a mission of civilization, fighting against traditions, myths, and regression persisting in the non-Western parts of the world (Bowden 2018). Yet, postcolonial thinkers emphasize that this is not solely a "top-down" phenomenon but affects the colonialist with the same intensity as it affects the "other" (O´Hagan 2002).

Talking about the foundations of the postcolonial school of thought, no path leads past its creator Edward Said (Juan, Jr 1998). Studying the relationship between the West and the so-called "Orient", Said (1978) concluded that the West as an epistemic community conceptualized the "Orient" as inferior, exotic, anti-modernist, and backward to legitimize its supremacy. In this context, knowledge about the "Orient" always served to stabilize the balance of Western hegemony. This led to a symbiosis between imperialism and the production of knowledge, as every interaction with the "Orient" first required information about it. Therefore, the notion

of the "Orient" does not just belong to the past of the modern Western world but is, as one of the "others" (next to a range of other cultures), an inseparable part of the self-perception of the West (Kamali 2017).

While the introduction of the "Orient", as well as its significance for the West and the ensuing cultural conflict, are helpful tools to rudimentarily conceptualize refugee pornography, it still suffers an important shortcoming. Namely, Said's original Orientalism is lacking a gender perspective, not incorporating the implications of this cultural conflict for women. Even more so, it does not consider the implications resulting from the different understandings of sexuality. Nonetheless, this was not solely a phenomenon in studies about Orientalism, but pervaded the early stages of postcolonialism as a whole as many Western feminist writers assumed "privileged" access that postcolonial subjects would have to such a research topic and, instead, assumed a position of "comfortable ignorance" towards this academic field (Mohanty 1988; Ashcroft 1989; Parashar 2017).

Nonetheless, through the years, this gap was filled by feminist writers. In this context, Yegenoglu's book Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism (1998) remains a groundbreaking work. In a classic postcolonial fashion, it "explores the discursive dynamics that secure a sovereign subject status for the West. It is about the cultural representation of the West to itself by way of a detour through the other" (Yegenoglu 1998: 1). However, the value of her work lies in the fact that it provides "an analysis of Orientalism that does not relegate the question of sexual difference to a sub-field in the analysis of colonial discourse as this study focuses on the unique articulation of sexual and cultural difference as they are produced and signified in the discourse of Orientalism" (Yegenoglu 1998: 1). The focal point of her analysis lies in the concept of the "veil", especially in the act of the "unveiling". According to her, the veil serves as a barrier "between the body of the Oriental woman and the Western gaze" (Yegenoglu 1998: 39). While numerous research projects around the veil focus on it as an object, emphasizing its oppressive properties (Mernissi 1991; Ahmed 1992), or arguing for its liberating purpose (El Guindi 1999; Hasan 2016; Lentin 1998; Ruby 2006), this book, in turn, focuses on the veil as a signifier of "Oriental" women, presenting them, as well as the "Orient" itself, as mysterious and exotic. This arouses the West's fantasies to penetrate the veiled surface of its "otherness", eager to "unveil" the "Oriental" woman and the knowledge that the "Orient" holds - if necessary, by force. This desire, she concludes, is constitutive of the Western hegemonic, colonial identity itself. Through this dynamic, the "Oriental" woman got sexualized and the veil became a "fetishized" object (Vivian 1999). Thus, the West projected it anachronistically onto a (sexual) context in which it did not exist as a category of thought beforehand.

Liberation, Emancipation, Conquest

How do these theoretical reflections now relate to refugee pornography? First and foremost, the popularity of this phenomenon elucidates the impression of the de-historicized, depoliticized and heavily culturized, as well as racialized Islam dispositive Attia (2010), describes. This culturalization stems from the colonial binary and still underlines our discourse around refugees, further fuelling the distinction between "us" and "them" and fusing the Arab ethnicity and Islamic religion into one category of thought, thereby creating a mythological "IslamLand" (Abu-Lughod 2013: 68) which has the "figure of the victimized Muslim woman" (Abu-Lughod 2013: 70) as its main feature. Due to the interrelatedness between (perceived) cultural and sexual differences, which Yegenoglu describes, the popularity of politicized porn as in the case of refugee pornography becomes clearer, as this politicization is just superficial and reveals a deeply ingrained perception of cultural differences stemming from a colonial mindset underlying Western societies. As seen in most cases, mass media (here in the form of internet pornography) functions as the most efficient agent in the reproduction of the image of the "other" (Kamali 2017). In the narrative of these movies, the "Orientalist" binary of the "gatekeepers and victims" (Kamali 2017: 8) serves as an underlying, meaning that the male refugee is assumed to be patriarchal, aggressive and incompatible with modern humanist Western societies, while the female refugee is a poor victim of traditional culture.

In this context, two (by no means mutually exclusive) possibilities arise on how refugee porn can be interpreted: First, the white man can live out his revenge fantasies stemming out of his fear of racist topoi like "foreign infiltration" ("Überfremdung"), miscegenation, or the "rape of white women" by Muslim men. These fantasies can now be satisfied through the observation of a white man sexually assaulting a Muslim woman that is perceived to be "exotic" and therefore, adding a form of fetishized conquest to the narrative. Increased search behaviour for this pornography such as the one shown above after the events in Cologne indicates this dynamic.

In another interpretation, the white man in the movie acts like the emancipator, liberating the female refugee in a material sense (by offering her money, food, housing in exchange for sex) and also liberating her sexually as he shows her experiences which her "misogynistic" cultural background denied her. However, the white man relies on misogynistic practices himself, subordinating the woman and dominating her in a manner usual in hardcore pornography and rape culture, thereby, rebutting the implied intent to save "brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1993: 93). In this vein, the subaltern position of the woman, for instance her belonging to a voice-less social group, is also shown verbally throughout the narrative: In the scenario given before the rape itself, the man speaks much more than the woman, who is generally

limited to verbally agreeing to his proposals (implying her consent for the ensuing sexual act). On the other side, the male part of speech is equally telling: In almost every case examined, the man offers the woman a form of compensation, thereby implying a "fair exchange" between both individuals. More importantly, it even suggests a form of empowerment which is being utilized quite frequently by the West with regard to Muslim women: As, for example, the US government employed the social empowerment of Afghan women to justify its military intervention in Afghanistan (Abu-Lughod 2013), or the French employed the cultural empowerment of Algerian women (through the liberation from the veil) to justify its colonization of Algeria (Fanon 2004), the white male in the movie employs the economic empowerment of the refugee woman to justify her sexual subordination. In all three cases, "empowerment" acts as a cover for exploitation and violence, once again closely intertwining the underlying themes of liberation and conquest.

In essence, this act can serve as a primal example of how the West once again constructs its own identity by a way of a detour through the "other" as a sexist mindset is being used to free a woman from the "sexist other" in whose creation the West had an enormous role to play in. As Fisher (2012) demonstrates in a historical analysis of the Western imperialist agenda in the "Orient", the colonial powers often used the so-called "patriarchal bargain", buying "the submission of men by offering them absolute power over women" (Fisher 2012: 8). Now, in the postcolonial era, the white man can look at the "Orient", describe it as inherently sexist, and offer the liberation of its subjects through hyper-sexualization. As Schaper, Beljan, Eitler, Ewing, and Gammerl (2018) write:

> "One important framework for all kinds of sexualized exoticism and exoticized sexual relations was European imperialism, which very directly gave political significance to cultural imaginations that helped to establish, justify and maintain relations of power and (sexual) exploitation. Many of these survived into the post-colonial era and gained new social, economic and cultural significance within an increasingly globalized world" (Schaper et al. 2018: 4)

The Significance of the Veil

In all the examined cases, the actresses participating in these movies wear one object which is of special significance for the narrative – the veil. Usually being a Hijab or a Niqab, this piece of cloth is the only signifier proclaiming that the woman is a refugee from a Muslim-majority country. As mentioned above, this serves as a perfect example of the process that Yegenoglu describes as the Western urge to "unveil" the "Oriental" woman. "Within a theory of the gaze, where the power of objectification can be traced back to an omniscient viewer, the options of resistance left to the objectified are framed within a binary opposition: Either the

veiled woman resists the colonial gaze by remaining veiled, or she relents to the gaze by unveiling" (Vivian 1999: 131). In the case of refugee pornography, the woman subjugates herself to the Western gaze by making herself visible and liberates herself through hyper-sexualization. Often, the woman also retains the veil on her head and divests the rest of her clothes. This serves as a reminder of the narrative the observer is watching, namely that the raped woman is specifically Muslim. In the case of the Hijab, this allows the viewer to see the woman´s facial expressions. The case of the Niqab, however, creates certain special implications:

Fanon (2004) explores the importance of the veil during the French colonization of Algeria. He notes that, although, as mentioned above, the veil was being used by the French to justify the occupation, it also deeply unnerved them. This, he concludes, stems from two facts: First, a veiled woman withdrew from the colonial administration built upon classification and order, therefore, gradually turning the veil into a symbol of resistance. "This woman who sees without being seen frustrates the colonizer" (Fanon 2004: 48) as her thoughts, which might as well be insurgent, remain hidden from the occupant. Second, it cultivates the colonizer's desire to unveil the woman as, unconsciously and due to his European socialization, he concludes that the veil must hide some unseen beauty that justifies the concealment in the first place.

All these deliberations come together in the pornographic movie in which the actress leaves the niqab on her head while exposing the rest of her body. Her face which could express pain, sadness, or anger, does not matter. Neither do her hidden thoughts scare the raping man nor the viewer. Even if she thinks of resistance, feels aversion or disgust, it is too late. Epistemologically speaking, the act of revealing the naked body in these contexts produces knowledge, which is that of the final colonial victory. As the woman unclothes herself, she is forced to overstep a certain cultural barrier, for instance the unavailability of the Muslim body to the Western gaze and, hence, unveils the "Orient´s" mysteries through the white man´s force and persuasion. As the penetration ensues soon thereafter and culminates in the male orgasm, the "Orient" has been defeated.

Conclusion

In this paper, I used the theoretical framework of a feminist-Orientalist intersection and applied it to refugee pornography. That way, I untangled the construction of the currently popular concept of refugee pornography as a racial fetishization of the veil serving as an extension of the sexualization of "Oriental" bodies during the colonial era. Through this lens, refugee pornography is just a further example of the culturized and racialized Islam dispositive and is supposed to exemplify the cultural differences to the West while at the same time developing clear hierarchies on top of which the white man sits – either as the enforcer of revenge stemming out of the observer's fantasies or as a saviour. In the narrative perpetuated by agents such as the porn industry, the Muslim woman, just as the "Orient" itself, is subjugated to the Western gaze, making herself visible and "liberating" herself in the eyes of the white male observer through hyper-sexualization, while at the same time showing her subaltern state in the patriarchal hierarchy through the act of sexual domination by the white, male porn actor. Most significantly, the veil remains the pivotal point in the narrative, signifying the woman as a Muslim refugee. Thereby, the woman suffers threefold discrimination in the form of patriarchal rape culture, cultural and religious discrimination in the form of Islamophobia, and white colonialist supremacy.

As statistically shown above, this phenomenon is very popular in Germany and, hence, highly relevant for academic research. The possible correlation to political events indicates the need for new debates on potential interrelations between politics and pornography and the possible influence on one another. Additionally, the themes and processes mentioned above open the doors for more in-depth intersectional postcolonial and feminist studies. Psychologically speaking, this category of porn also raises questions about the real-world implications of the woman's objectification and the effects on the perceived cultural difference. In this field, concepts such as the "Sexualized Body Inversion Hypothesis" (Cogoni et al. 2018) or "destructive ambivalence" (Oglov 1991) could be applied to refugee pornography to provide potential answers on that matter. Additionally, it should be noted that this sexual fetishization of the "other" stemming from colonial times is by no means restricted to the "Oriental" body alone. Holmes (2016), for example, analysed the sexualized language in the colonial history of the Americas and the Atlantic slave trade (for example the description of the New World as the "virgin land" by colonizers, "suggesting the land's passive and submissive nature, awaiting the conquest of men."; Holmes 2016: 1) which was followed by the hyper-sexualization of black people, attributing them over proportionally large genitalia and a feral sex drive. This raises the question if these sentiments translate into pornography as well and produce similar dynamics which, in turn, could disturb integration processes and fuel right-wing attitudes.

Finally, studies on the global political economy could further open their range of analysis towards the "desire economies" (Agathangelou 2004) and scrutinize the material consequences of such pornography, namely place this phenomenon into the framework of globalizing social relations producing the sexualization and commodification of female migrant labour. After all, questions left unanswered in this paper which would relate to this field are: Who profits from this form of pornography? Where are they located? Which methods do they use in its production/how consensual is its production? How do they advertise it and with the help of whom?

In precis, refugee pornography offers a plethora of questions for scholars in social sciences and humanities alike and should be further examined if we want to find ways to combat the discursive constructions underlying this trend.

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Footnotes:

[1] All views as of 02.04.2019

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